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THE SINGER & HER SONG
THERE IS A PLACE BEYOND SPACE AND TIME WHERE NONE OF THE RULES OF REALITY APPLY. IT IS CALLED LIMBO.
ITS RULER IS A FIFTEEN-YEAR OLD MUTANT WITH THE FACE OF AN ANGEL AND AT LEAST PART OF THE SOUL OF A DEVIL INCARNATE, HER NAME IS ILLYANA RASPUTIN.
MOMENTS AGO, IN LOS ANGELES, AN ENTITY KNOWN AS THE BEYONDER CALLED FORTH THAT PART OF HER WHICH SHE HAS ALWAYS KEPT HIDDEN AND FOUGHT WITH ALL HER STRENGTH TO DENY.* NOW, THANKS TO HIM, SHE HAS BECOME THE DARKCHILDE -- WHO WILL SOMEDAY BRING ABOUT ARMAGEDDON, THE OBLITERATION OF HER WORLD AND ALL ITS PEOPLE.
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NEW MUTANTS STARS
THIS REVELATION PROVED MORE THAN SHE COULD BEAR -- AND SO, IN HER MADNESS AND TERROR, SHE FLED HERE TO LIMBO, TAKING WITH HER FOUR FELLOW MUTANTS: KITTY PRYDE, HER BEST FRIEND, SAM GUTHRIE, ALISON BLAIRE (THE DAZZLER) AND RACHEL SUMMERS.
*IN SECRET WARS II #1 -- A.

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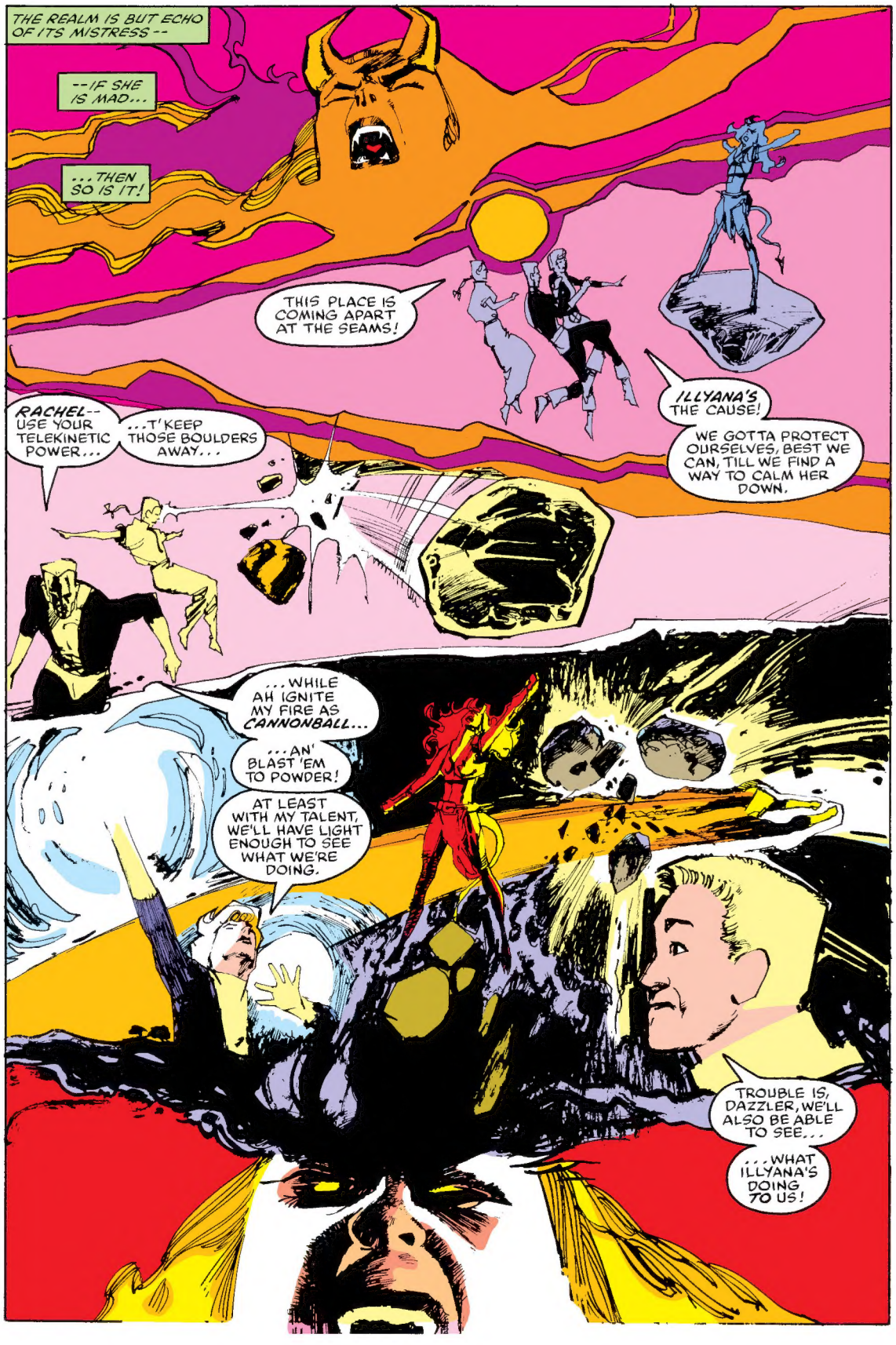
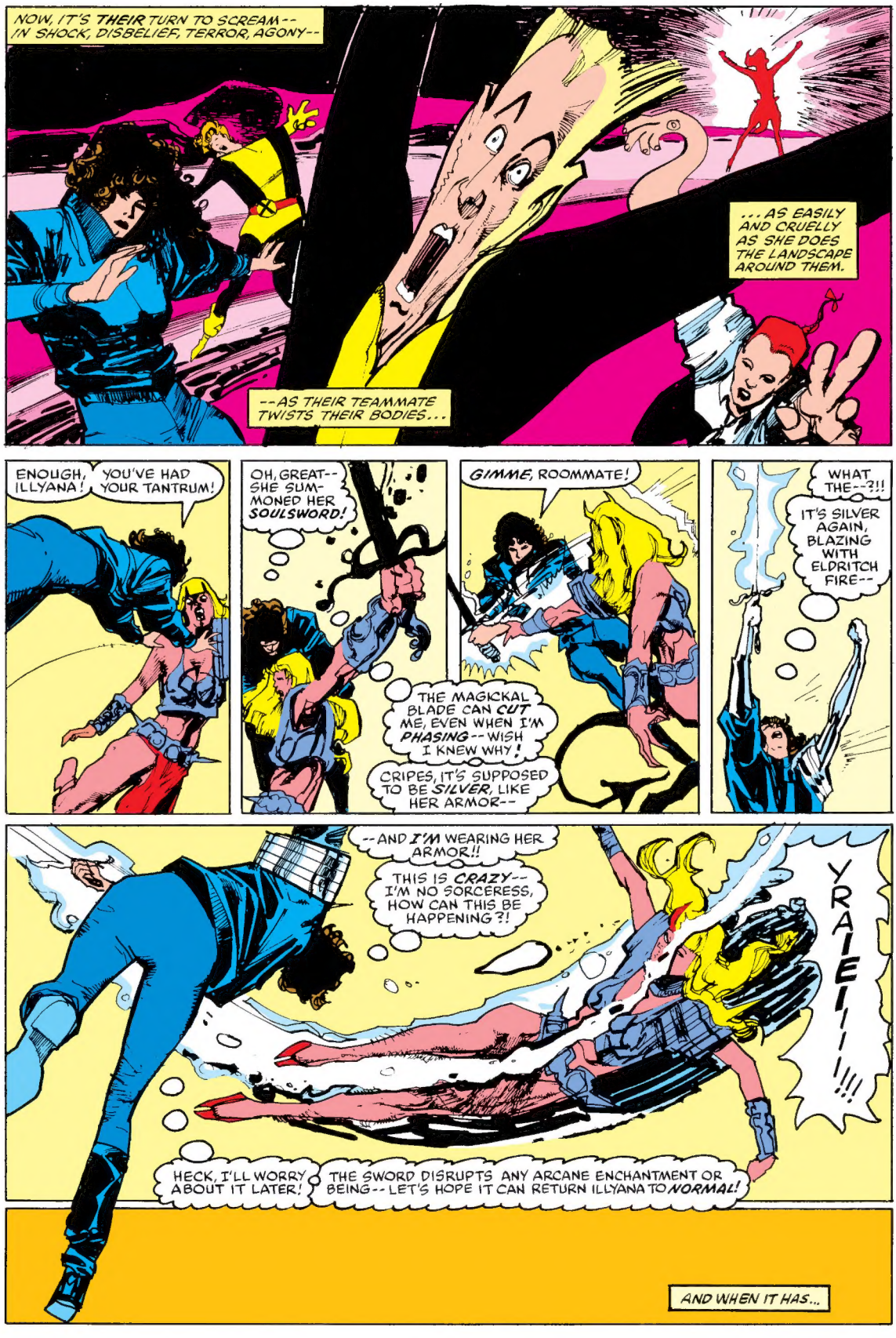
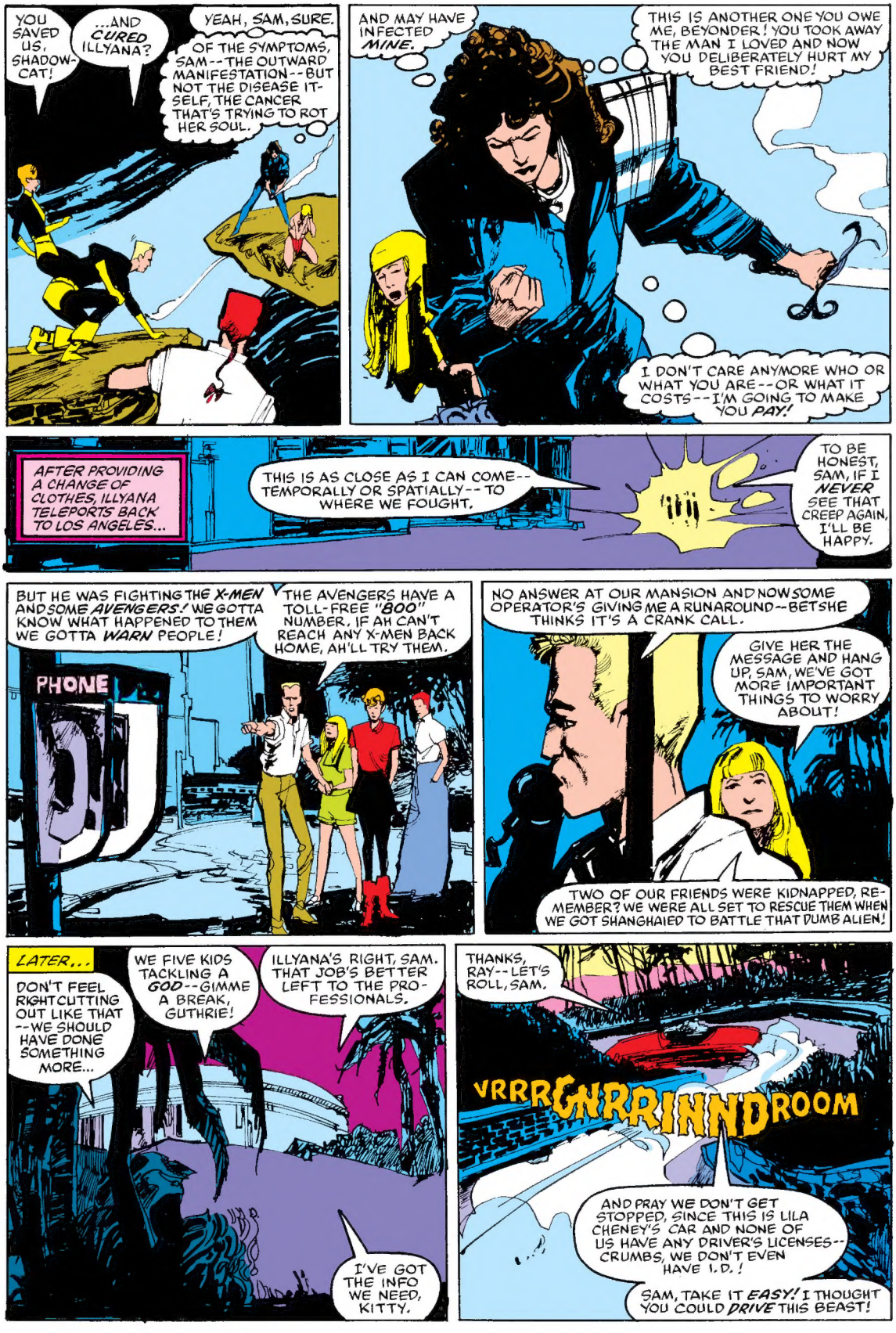
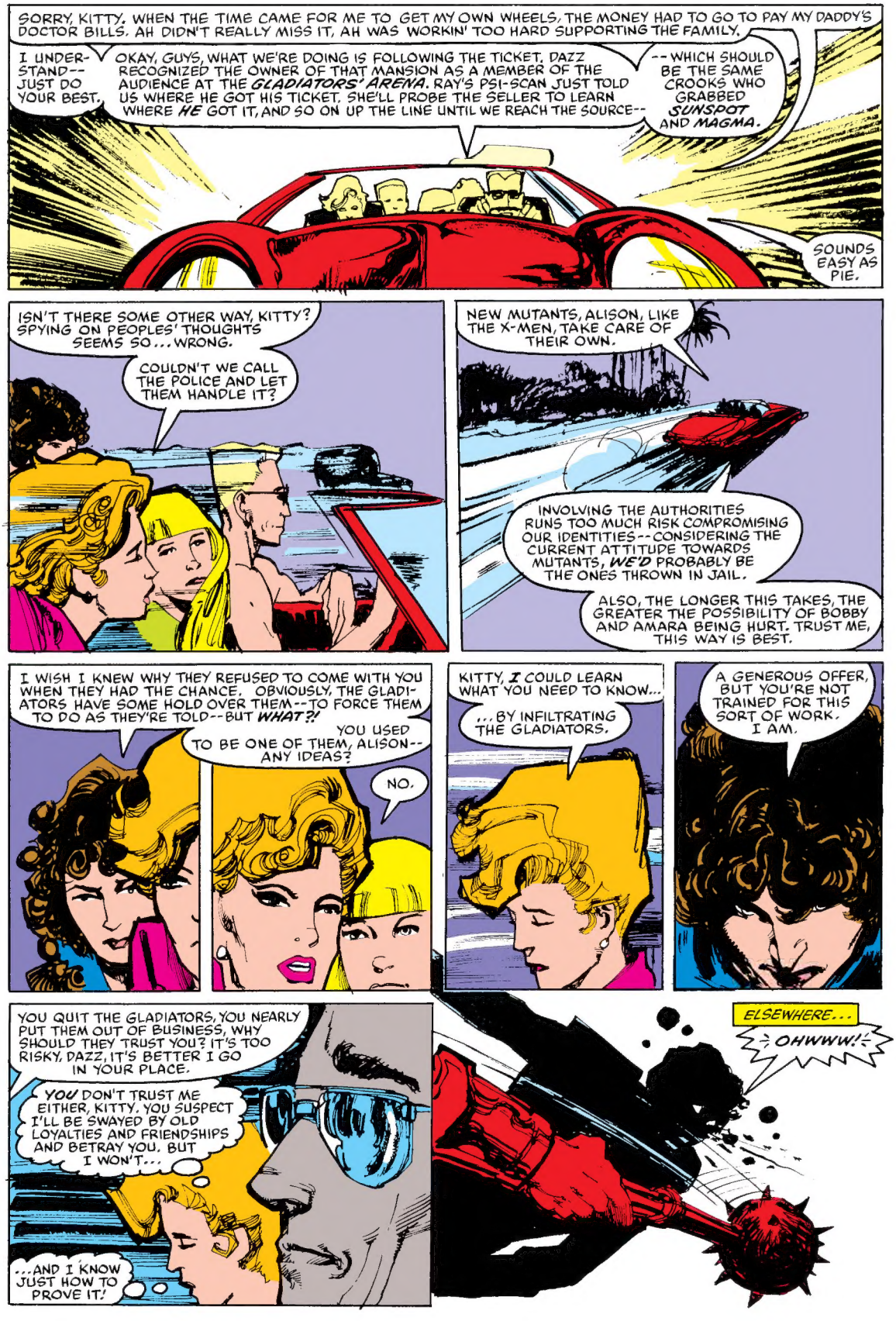
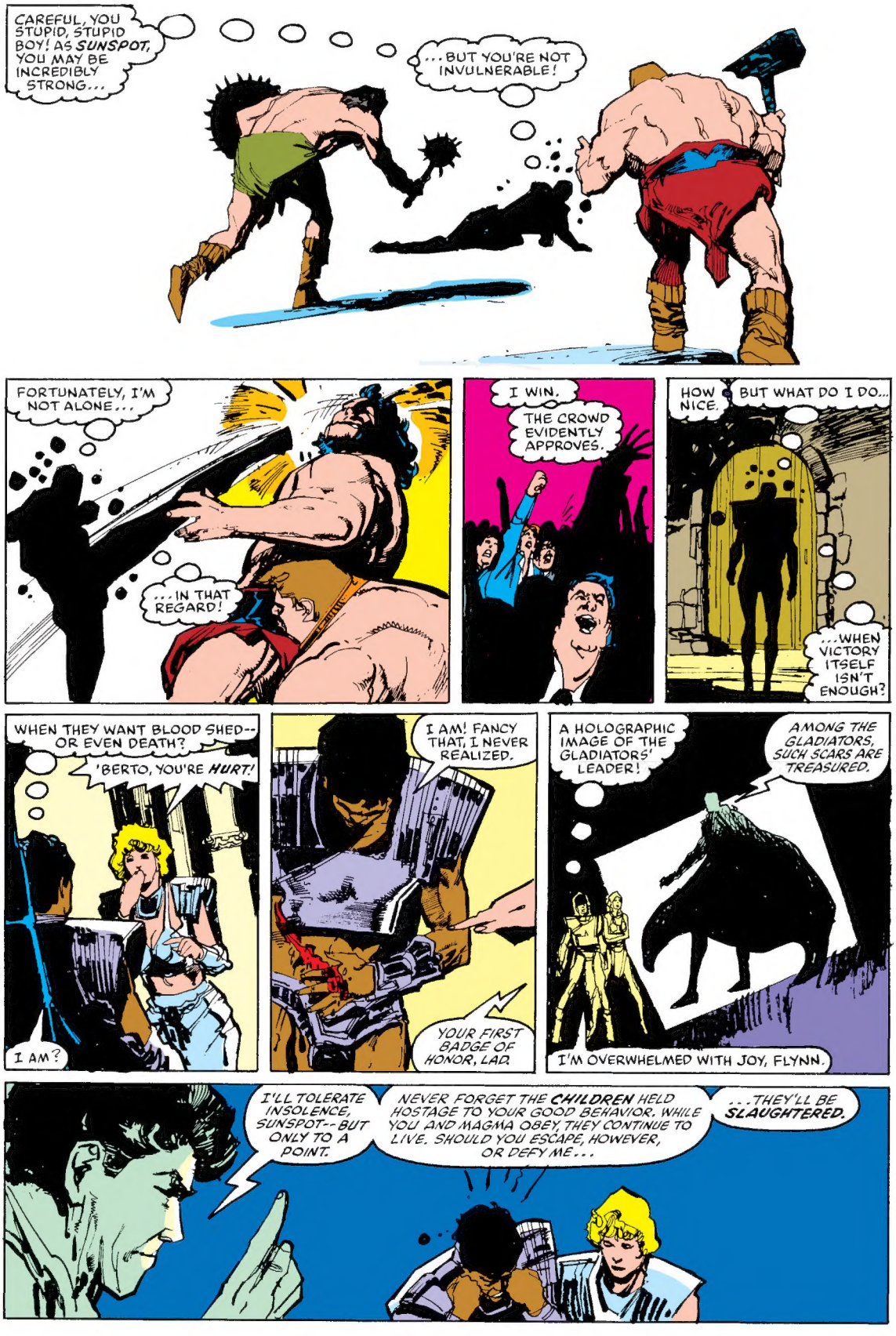
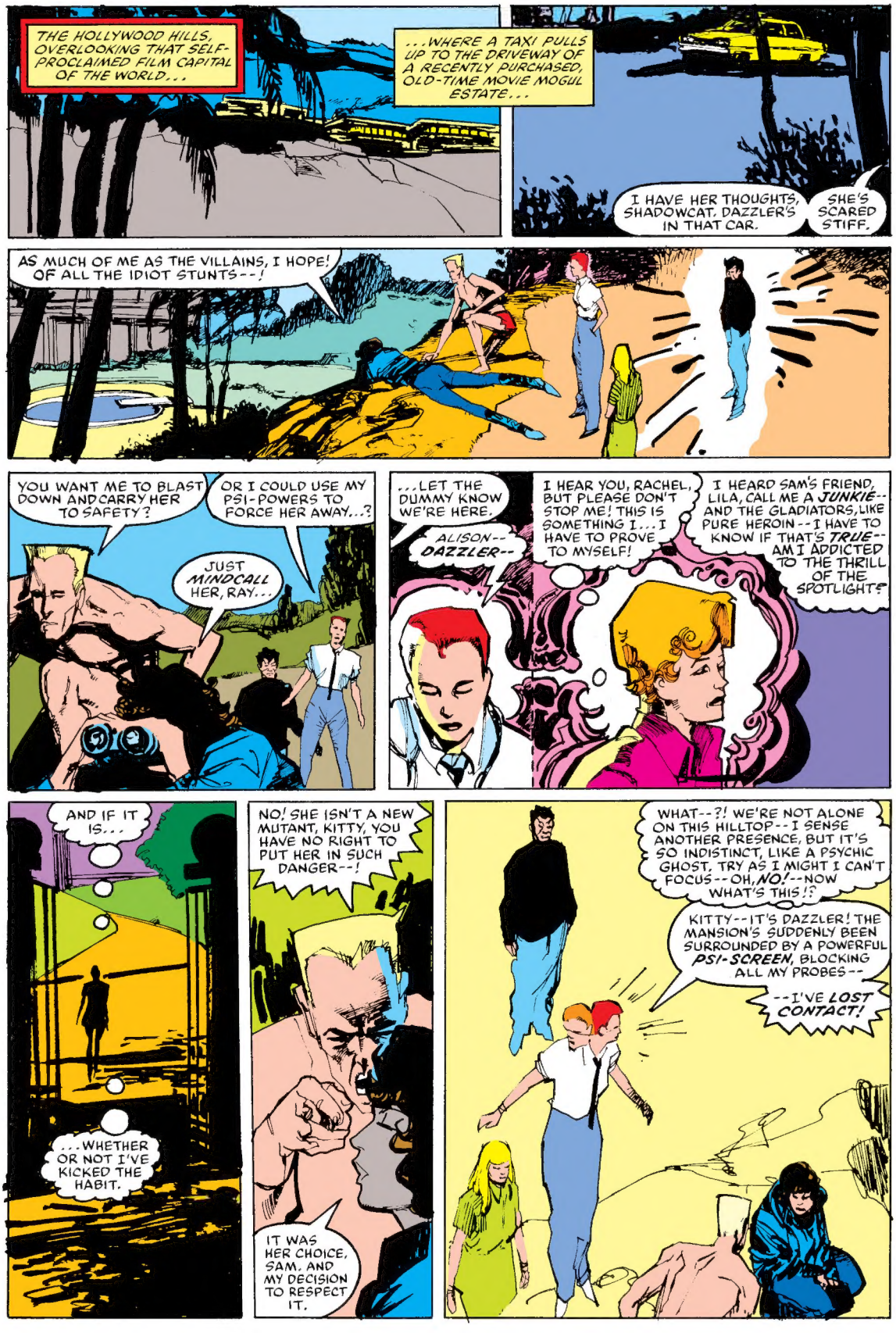

THE REALM IS BUT ECHO OF ITS MISTRESS --
--IF SHE IS MAD...
...THEN SO IS IT!
THIS PLACE IS COMING APART AT THE SEAMS!
ILLYANA'S THE CAUSE!
WE GOTTA PROTECT OURSELVES, BEST WE CAN, TILL WE FIND A WAY TO CALM HER DOWN.
RACHEL-- USE YOUR TELEKINETIC POWER...
...T'KEEP THOSE BOULDERS AWAY...
...WHILE AH IGNITE MY FIRE AS CANNONBALL...
...AN' BLAST 'EM TO POWDER!
AT LEAST WITH MY TALENT, WE'LL HAVE LIGHT ENOUGH TO SEE WHAT WE'RE DOING.
TROUBLE IS, DAZZLER, WE'LL ALSO BE ABLE TO SEE...
...WHAT ILLYANA'S DOING TO US!

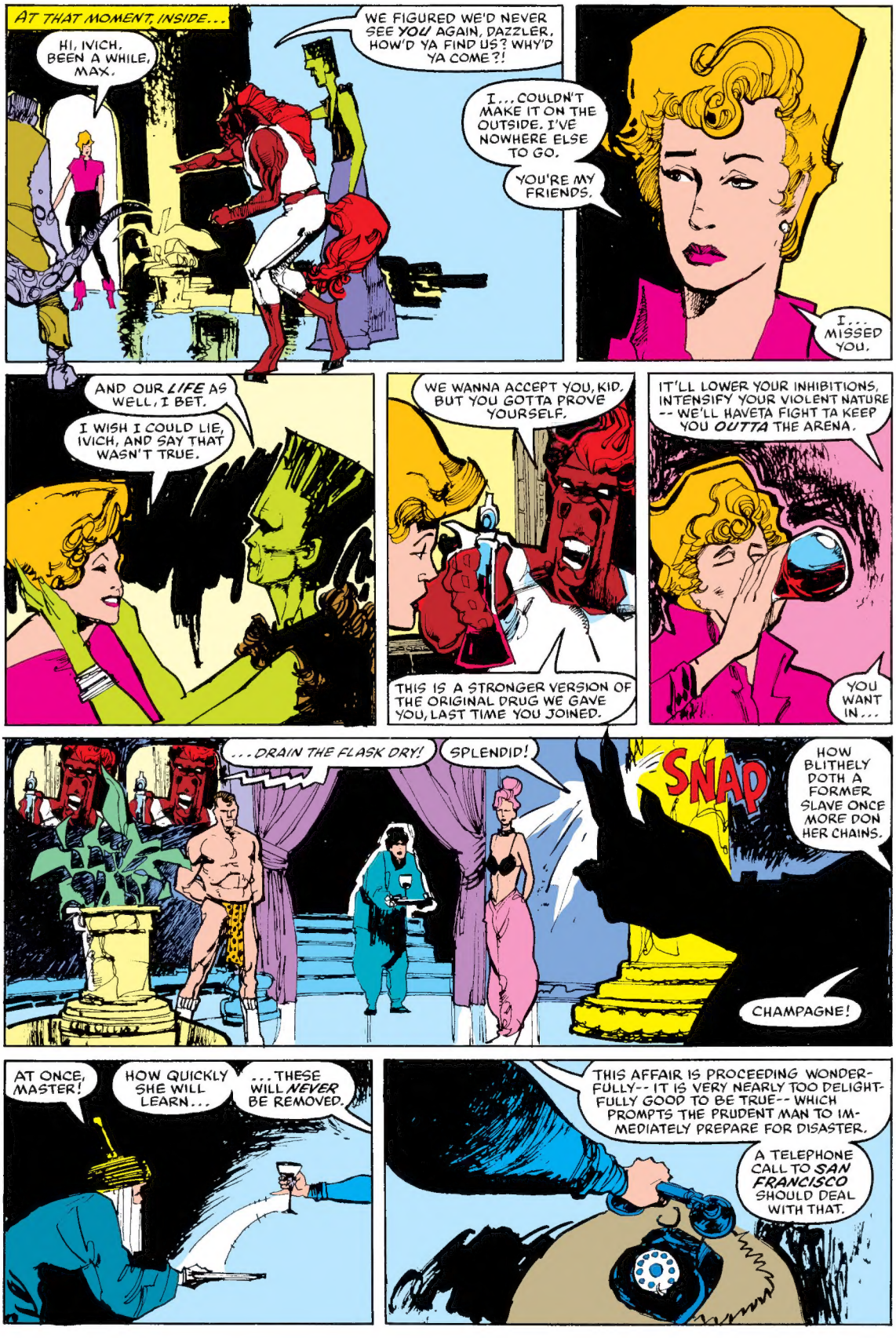

NOW, IT'S THEIR TURN TO SCREAM-- IN SHOCK, DISBELIEF, TERROR, AGONY--
--AS THEIR TEAMMATE TWISTS THEIR BODIES...
...AS EASILY AND CRUELLY AS SHE DOES THE LANDSCAPE AROUND THEM.
ENOUGH, ILLYANA! YOU'VE HAD YOUR TANTRUM!
OH, GREAT-- SHE SUMMONED HER SOULSWORD!
GIMME, ROOMMATE!
THE MAGICKAL BLADE CAN CUT ME, EVEN WHEN I'M PHASING-- WISH I KNEW WHY!
CRIPES, IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE SILVER, LIKE HER ARMOR--
WHAT THE--?!!
IT'S SILVER AGAIN, BLAZING WITH ELDRITCH FIRE--
--AND I'M WEARING HER ARMOR!!
THIS IS CRAZY-- I'M NO SORCERESS, HOW CAN THIS BE HAPPENING?!
YRAIEI!!!
HECK, I'LL WORRY ABOUT IT LATER!
THE SWORD DISRUPTS ANY ARCANE ENCHANTMENT OR BEING-- LET'S HOPE IT CAN RETURN ILLYANA TO NORMAL!
AND WHEN IT HAS...

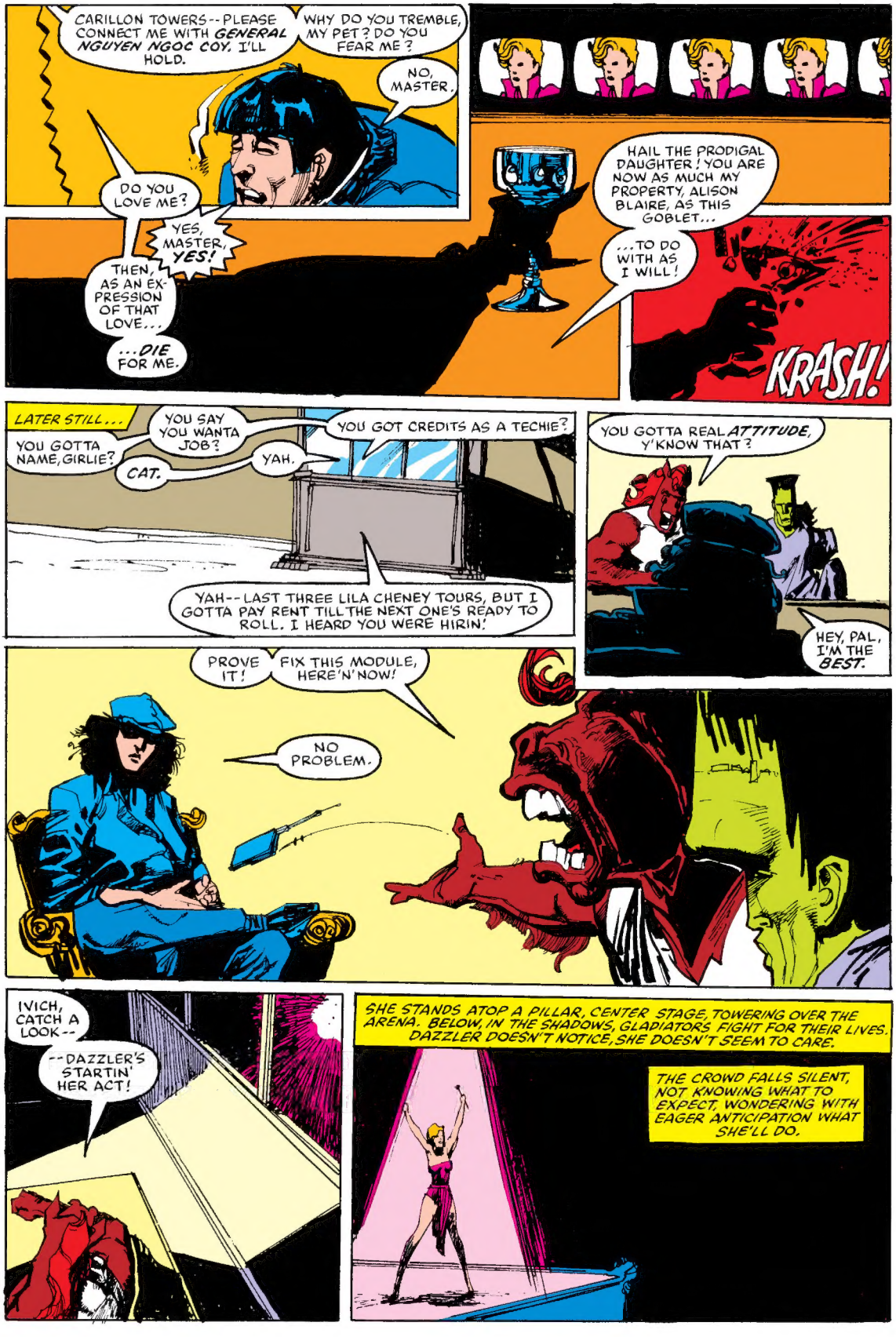

YOU SAVED US, SHADOW-CAT!
...AND CURED ILLYANA?
YEAH, SAM, SURE. OF THE SYMPTOMS, SAM--THE OUTWARD MANIFESTATION--BUT NOT THE DISEASE ITSELF, THE CANCER THAT'S TRYING TO ROT HER SOUL.
AND MAY HAVE INFECTED MINE.
THIS IS ANOTHER ONE YOU OWE ME, BEYONDER! YOU TOOK AWAY THE MAN I LOVED AND NOW YOU DELIBERATELY HURT MY BEST FRIEND!
I DON'T CARE ANYMORE WHO OR WHAT YOU ARE--OR WHAT IT COSTS--I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU PAY!
AFTER PROVIDING A CHANGE OF CLOTHES, ILLYANA TELEPORTS BACK TO LOS ANGELES...
THIS IS AS CLOSE AS I CAN COME--TEMPORALLY OR SPATIALLY--TO WHERE WE FOUGHT.
TO BE HONEST, SAM, IF I NEVER SEE THAT CREEP AGAIN, I'LL BE HAPPY.
BUT HE WAS FIGHTING THE X-MEN AND SOME AVENGERS! WE GOTTA KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM WE GOTTA WARN PEOPLE!
THE AVENGERS HAVE A TOLL-FREE "800" NUMBER. IF AH CAN'T REACH ANY X-MEN BACK HOME, AH'LL TRY THEM.
PHONE
NO ANSWER AT OUR MANSION AND NOW SOME OPERATOR'S GIVING ME A RUNAROUND--BETSHE THINKS IT'S A CRANK CALL.
GIVE HER THE MESSAGE AND HANG UP, SAM, WE'VE GOT MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT!
TWO OF OUR FRIENDS WERE KIDNAPPED, REMEMBER? WE WERE ALL SET TO RESCUE THEM WHEN WE GOT SHANGHAIED TO BATTLE THAT DUMB ALIEN!
LATER...
DON'T FEEL RIGHT CUTTING OUT LIKE THAT--WE SHOULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING MORE...
WE FIVE KIDS TACKLING A GOD--GIMME A BREAK, GUTHRIE!
ILLYANA'S RIGHT, SAM. THAT JOB'S BETTER LEFT TO THE PROFESSIONALS.
I'VE GOT THE INFO WE NEED, KITTY.
THANKS, RAY--LET'S ROLL, SAM.
VRRRGNRRINNDROOM
AND PRAY WE DON'T GET STOPPED, SINCE THIS IS LILA CHENEY'S CAR AND NONE OF US HAVE ANY DRIVER'S LICENSES--CRUMBS, WE DON'T EVEN HAVE I.D.!
SAM, TAKE IT EASY! I THOUGHT YOU COULD DRIVE THIS BEAST!


SORRY, KITTY. WHEN THE TIME CAME FOR ME TO GET MY OWN WHEELS, THE MONEY HAD TO GO TO PAY MY DADDY'S DOCTOR BILLS. AH DIDN'T REALLY MISS IT, AH WAS WORKIN' TOO HARD SUPPORTING THE FAMILY.
I UNDERSTAND--JUST DO YOUR BEST.
OKAY, GUYS, WHAT WE'RE DOING IS FOLLOWING THE TICKET. DAZZ RECOGNIZED THE OWNER OF THAT MANSION AS A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE AT THE GLADIATORS' ARENA. RAY'S PSI-SCAN JUST TOLD US WHERE HE GOT HIS TICKET. SHE'LL PROBE THE SELLER TO LEARN WHERE HE GOT IT, AND SO ON UP THE LINE UNTIL WE REACH THE SOURCE--
--WHICH SHOULD BE THE SAME CROOKS WHO GRABBED SUNSPOT AND MAGMA.
SOUNDS EASY AS PIE.
ISN'T THERE SOME OTHER WAY, KITTY? SPYING ON PEOPLES' THOUGHTS SEEMS SO...WRONG.
COULDN'T WE CALL THE POLICE AND LET THEM HANDLE IT?
NEW MUTANTS, ALISON, LIKE THE X-MEN, TAKE CARE OF THEIR OWN.
INVOLVING THE AUTHORITIES RUNS TOO MUCH RISK COMPROMISING OUR IDENTITIES--CONSIDERING THE CURRENT ATTITUDE TOWARDS MUTANTS, WE'D PROBABLY BE THE ONES THROWN IN JAIL.
ALSO, THE LONGER THIS TAKES, THE GREATER THE POSSIBILITY OF BOBBY AND AMARA BEING HURT. TRUST ME, THIS WAY IS BEST.
I WISH I KNEW WHY THEY REFUSED TO COME WITH YOU WHEN THEY HAD THE CHANCE. OBVIOUSLY, THE GLADIATORS HAVE SOME HOLD OVER THEM--TO FORCE THEM TO DO AS THEY'RE TOLD--BUT WHAT?!
YOU USED TO BE ONE OF THEM, ALISON--ANY IDEAS?
NO.
KITTY, I COULD LEARN WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW...
...BY INFILTRATING THE GLADIATORS.
A GENEROUS OFFER, BUT YOU'RE NOT TRAINED FOR THIS SORT OF WORK. I AM.
YOU QUIT THE GLADIATORS, YOU NEARLY PUT THEM OUT OF BUSINESS, WHY SHOULD THEY TRUST YOU? IT'S TOO RISKY, DAZZ, IT'S BETTER I GO IN YOUR PLACE.
YOU DON'T TRUST ME EITHER, KITTY. YOU SUSPECT I'LL BE SWAYED BY OLD LOYALTIES AND FRIENDSHIPS AND BETRAY YOU. BUT I WON'T...
...AND I KNOW JUST HOW TO PROVE IT!
ELSEWHERE...
OHWWW!

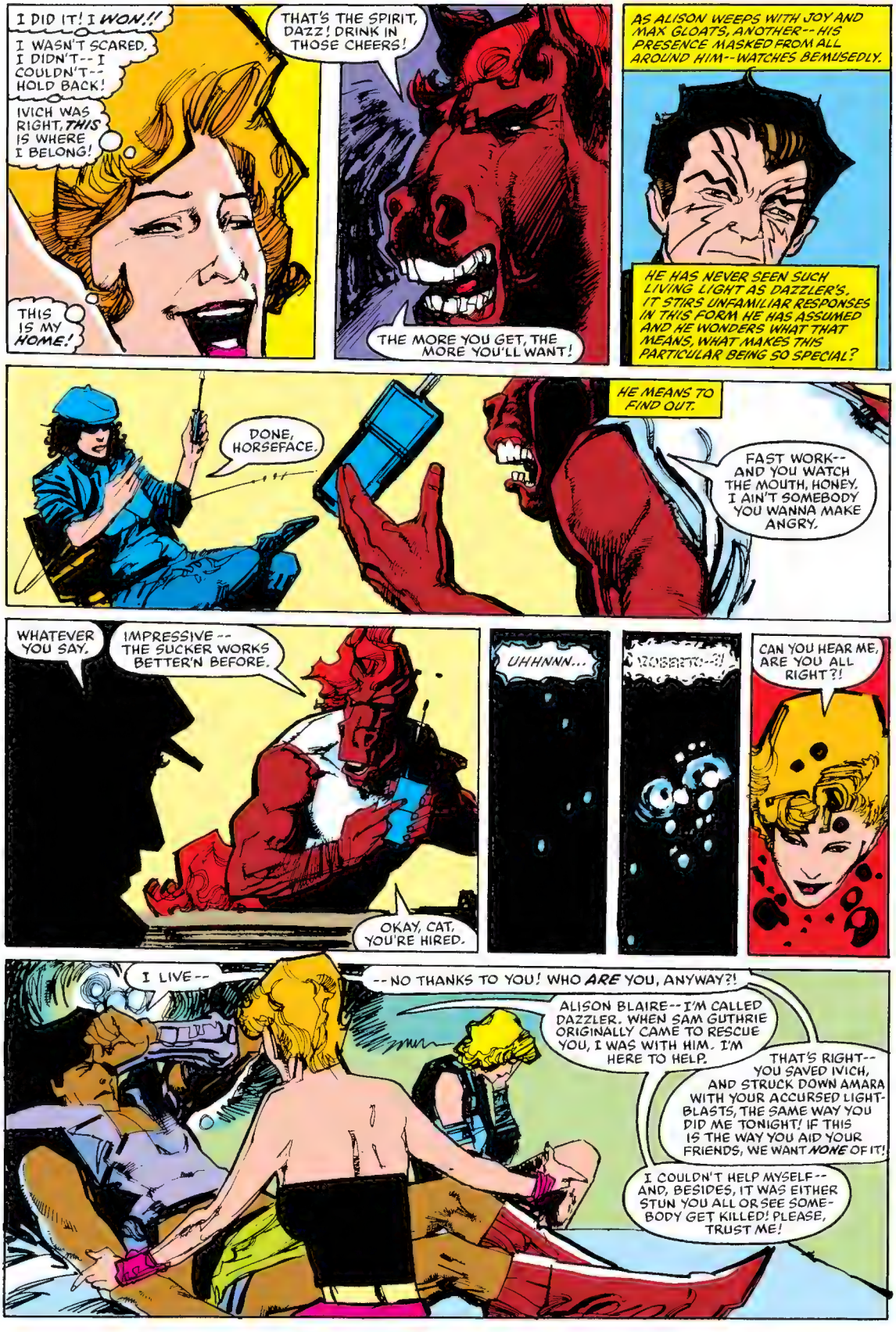

CAREFUL, YOU STUPID, STUPID BOY! AS SUNSPOT, YOU MAY BE INCREDIBLY STRONG...
...BUT YOU'RE NOT INVULNERABLE!
FORTUNATELY, I'M NOT ALONE...
...IN THAT REGARD!
I WIN.
THE CROWD EVIDENTLY APPROVES.
HOW NICE.
BUT WHAT DO I DO...
...WHEN VICTORY ITSELF ISN'T ENOUGH?
WHEN THEY WANT BLOOD SHED--OR EVEN DEATH?
'BERTO, YOU'RE HURT!
I AM?
I AM! FANCY THAT, I NEVER REALIZED.
YOUR FIRST BADGE OF HONOR, LAD.
A HOLOGRAPHIC IMAGE OF THE GLADIATORS' LEADER!
AMONG THE GLADIATORS, SUCH SCARS ARE TREASURED.
I'M OVERWHELMED WITH JOY, FLYNN.
I'LL TOLERATE INSOLENCE, SUNSPOT-- BUT ONLY TO A POINT.
NEVER FORGET THE CHILDREN HELD HOSTAGE TO YOUR GOOD BEHAVIOR. WHILE YOU AND MAGMA OBEY, THEY CONTINUE TO LIVE. SHOULD YOU ESCAPE, HOWEVER, OR DEFY ME...
...THEY'LL BE SLAUGHTERED.

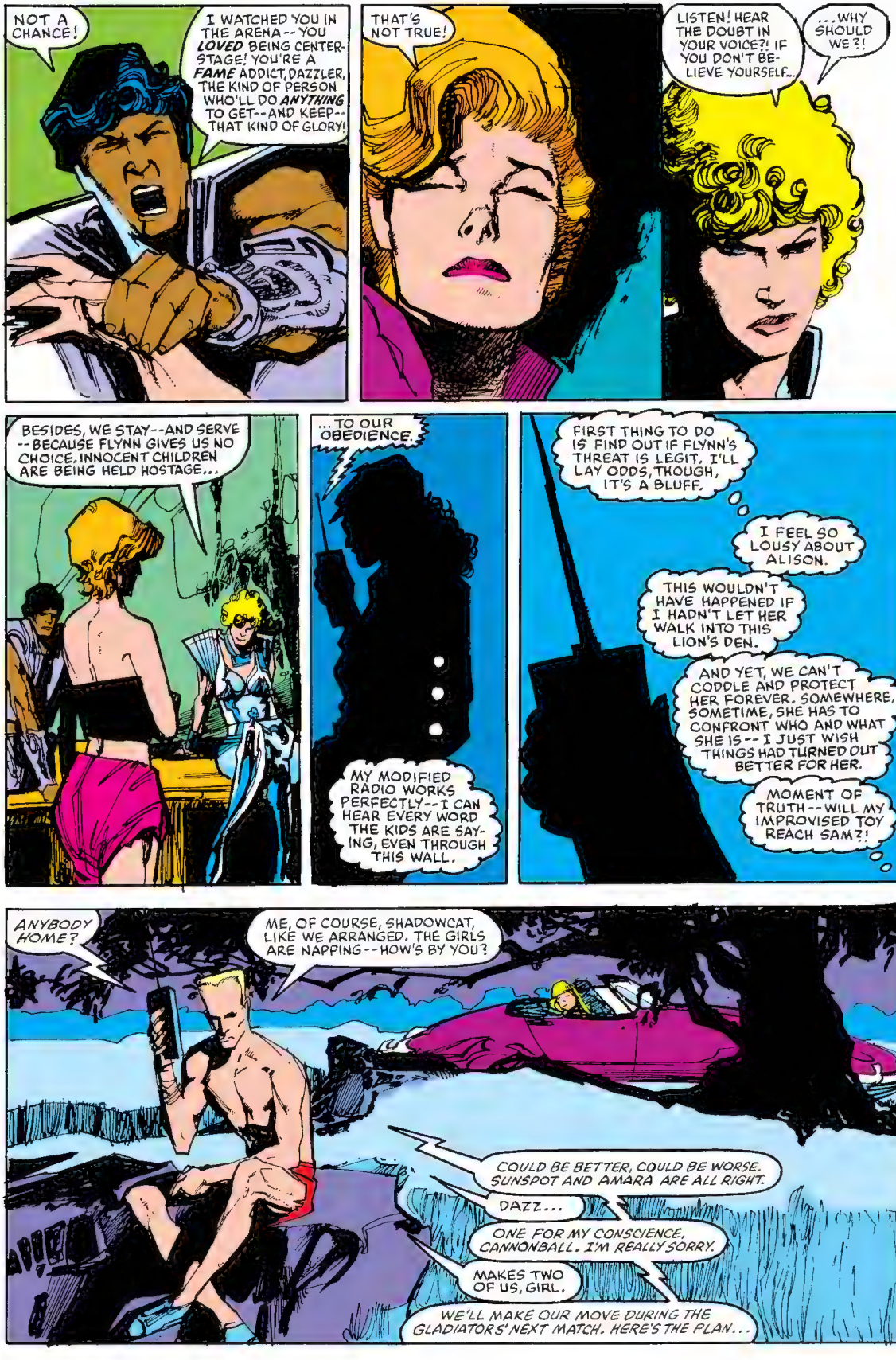

THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS, OVERLOOKING THAT SELF-PROCLAIMED FILM CAPITAL OF THE WORLD...
...WHERE A TAXI PULLS UP TO THE DRIVEWAY OF A RECENTLY PURCHASED, OLD-TIME MOVIE MOGUL ESTATE...
I HAVE HER THOUGHTS, SHADOWCAT. DAZZLER'S IN THAT CAR.
SHE'S SCARED STIFF.
AS MUCH OF ME AS THE VILLAINS, I HOPE! OF ALL THE IDIOT STUNTS--!
YOU WANT ME TO BLAST DOWN AND CARRY HER TO SAFETY?
OR I COULD USE MY PSI-POWERS TO FORCE HER AWAY...?
JUST MINDCALL HER, RAY...
...LET THE DUMMY KNOW WE'RE HERE.
ALISON-- DAZZLER--
I HEAR YOU, RACHEL, BUT PLEASE DON'T STOP ME! THIS IS SOMETHING I... I HAVE TO PROVE TO MYSELF!
I HEARD SAM'S FRIEND, LILA, CALL ME A JUNKIE-- AND THE GLADIATORS, LIKE PURE HEROIN -- I HAVE TO KNOW IF THAT'S TRUE-- AM I ADDICTED TO THE THRILL OF THE SPOTLIGHT?
AND IF IT IS...
...WHETHER OR NOT I'VE KICKED THE HABIT.
NO! SHE ISN'T A NEW MUTANT, KITTY, YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO PUT HER IN SUCH DANGER--!
IT WAS HER CHOICE, SAM. AND MY DECISION TO RESPECT IT.
WHAT--?! WE'RE NOT ALONE ON THIS HILLTOP-- I SENSE ANOTHER PRESENCE, BUT IT'S SO INDISTINCT, LIKE A PSYCHIC GHOST. TRY AS I MIGHT I CAN'T FOCUS-- OH, NO!--NOW WHAT'S THIS!?
KITTY--IT'S DAZZLER! THE MANSION'S SUDDENLY BEEN SURROUNDED BY A POWERFUL PSI-SCREEN, BLOCKING ALL MY PROBES--
--I'VE LOST CONTACT!


AT THAT MOMENT, INSIDE...
HI, IVICH. BEEN A WHILE, MAX.
WE FIGURED WE'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN, DAZZLER. HOW'D YA FIND US? WHY'D YA COME?!
I... COULDN'T MAKE IT ON THE OUTSIDE. I'VE NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.
YOU'RE MY FRIENDS.
I... MISSED YOU.
AND OUR LIFE AS WELL, I BET.
I WISH I COULD LIE, IVICH, AND SAY THAT WASN'T TRUE.
WE WANNA ACCEPT YOU, KID. BUT YOU GOTTA PROVE YOURSELF.
THIS IS A STRONGER VERSION OF THE ORIGINAL DRUG WE GAVE YOU, LAST TIME YOU JOINED.
IT'LL LOWER YOUR INHIBITIONS, INTENSIFY YOUR VIOLENT NATURE -- WE'LL HAVETA FIGHT TA KEEP YOU OUTTA THE ARENA.
YOU WANT IN...
...DRAIN THE FLASK DRY!
SPLENDID!
SNAP
HOW BLITHELY DOTH A FORMER SLAVE ONCE MORE DON HER CHAINS.
CHAMPAGNE!
AT ONCE, MASTER!
HOW QUICKLY SHE WILL LEARN...
...THESE WILL NEVER BE REMOVED.
THIS AFFAIR IS PROCEEDING WONDERFULLY-- IT IS VERY NEARLY TOO DELIGHTFULLY GOOD TO BE TRUE-- WHICH PROMPTS THE PRUDENT MAN TO IMMEDIATELY PREPARE FOR DISASTER.
A TELEPHONE CALL TO SAN FRANCISCO SHOULD DEAL WITH THAT.

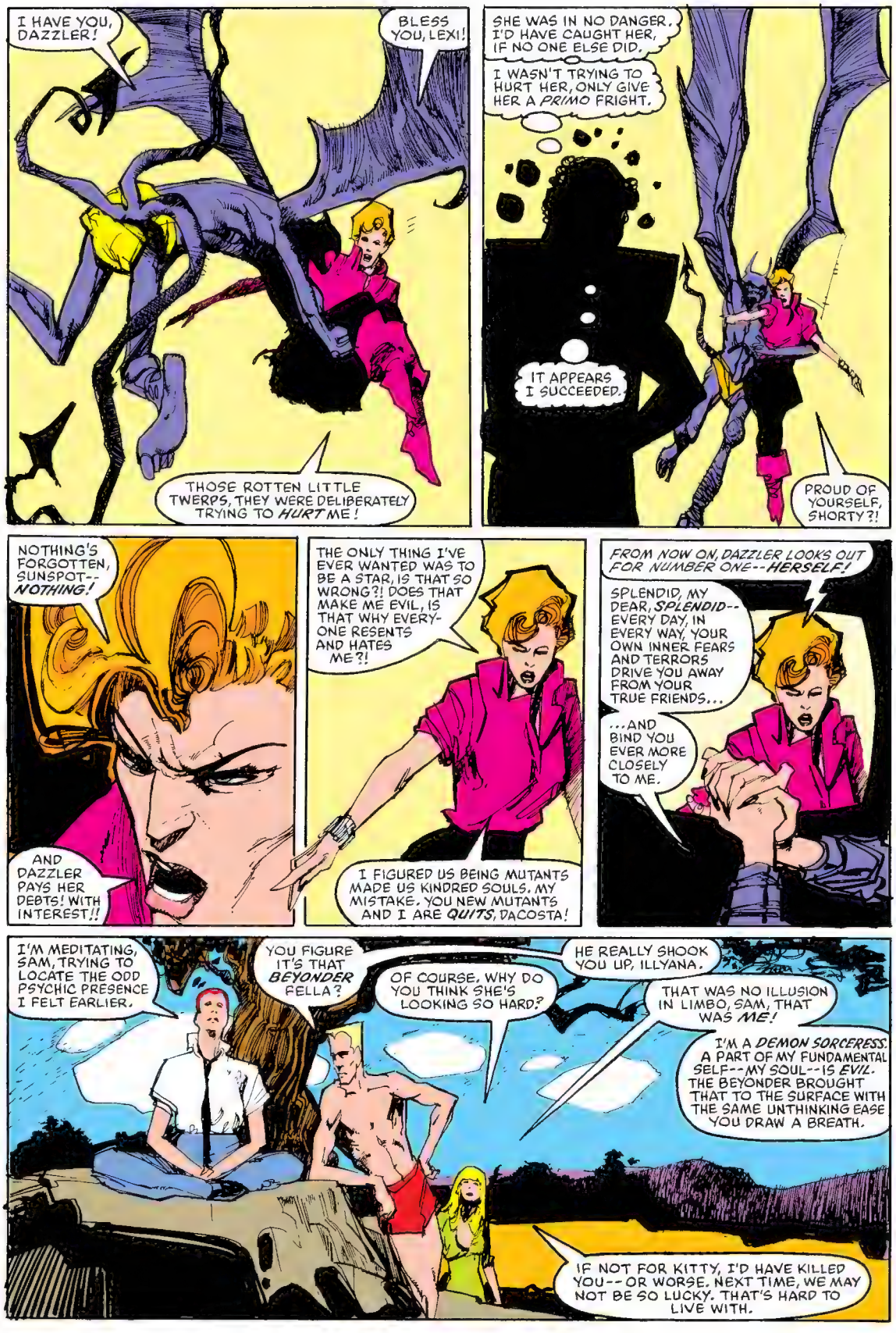

CARILLON TOWERS--PLEASE CONNECT ME WITH GENERAL NGUYEN NGOC COY. I'LL HOLD.
WHY DO YOU TREMBLE, MY PET? DO YOU FEAR ME?
NO, MASTER.
DO YOU LOVE ME?
YES, MASTER, YES!
THEN, AS AN EXPRESSION OF THAT LOVE...
...DIE FOR ME.
HAIL THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER! YOU ARE NOW AS MUCH MY PROPERTY, ALISON BLAIRE, AS THIS GOBLET...
...TO DO WITH AS I WILL!
KRASH!
LATER STILL...
YOU GOTTA NAME, GIRLIE?
YOU SAY YOU WANTA JOB?
CAT.
YAH.
YOU GOT CREDITS AS A TECHIE?
YAH--LAST THREE LILA CHENEY TOURS, BUT I GOTTA PAY RENT TILL THE NEXT ONE'S READY TO ROLL. I HEARD YOU WERE HIRIN'
YOU GOTTA REAL ATTITUDE, Y'KNOW THAT?
HEY, PAL, I'M THE BEST.
PROVE IT!
FIX THIS MODULE, HERE'N'NOW!
NO PROBLEM.
IVICH, CATCH A LOOK--
--DAZZLER'S STARTIN' HER ACT!
SHE STANDS ATOP A PILLAR, CENTER STAGE, TOWERING OVER THE ARENA. BELOW, IN THE SHADOWS, GLADIATORS FIGHT FOR THEIR LIVES. DAZZLER DOESN'T NOTICE, SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO CARE.
THE CROWD FALLS SILENT, NOT KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT, WONDERING WITH EAGER ANTICIPATION WHAT SHE'LL DO.

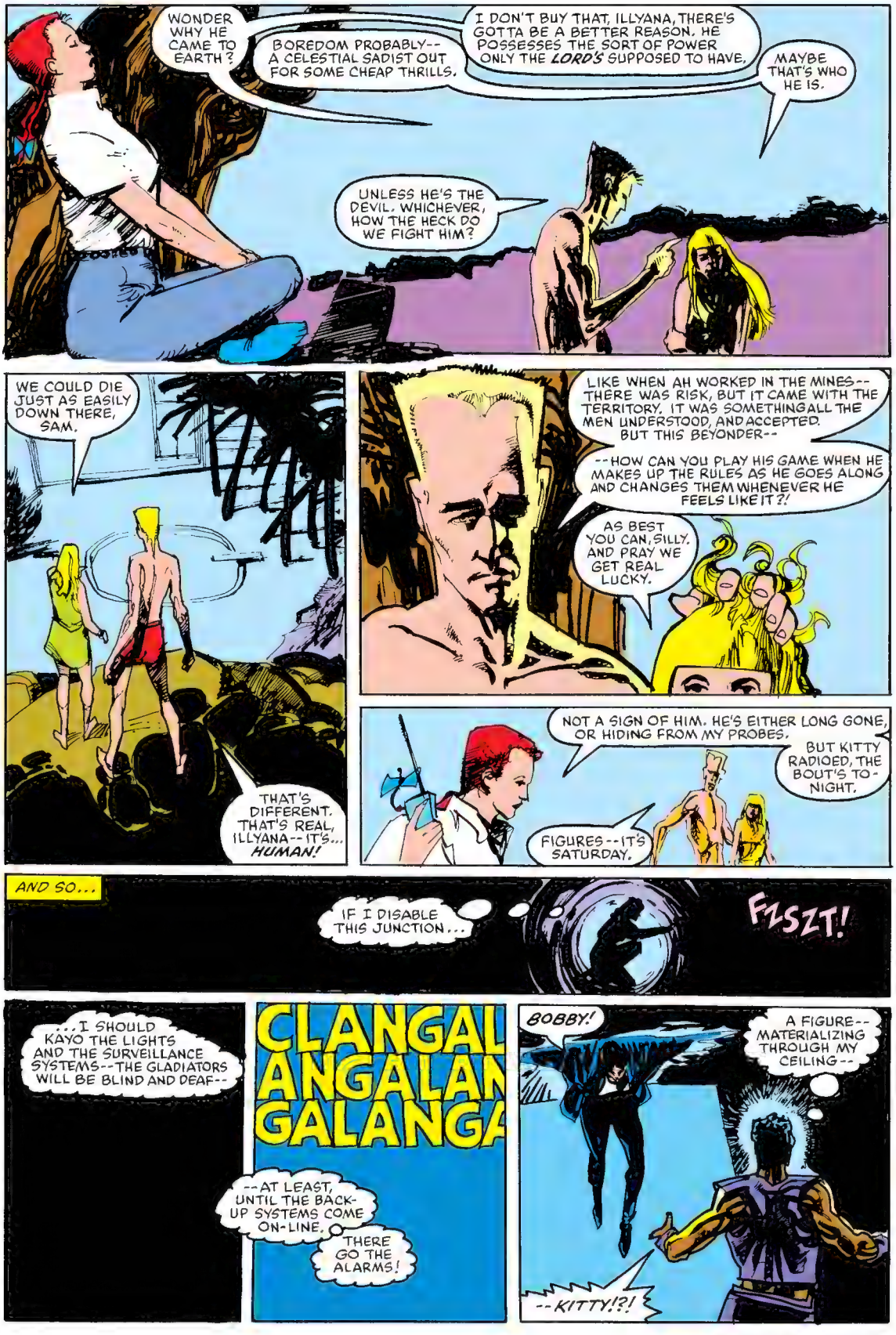
THEN, THE MUSIC STARTS--A HARD, DRIVING, HEAVY METAL BEAT--
--AND SHE BEGINS TO SING...
...FROM HER HEART AND GUT AND SOUL.
AND WITH THE SONG COMES LIGHT OF ALL INTENSITIES AND MORE COLORS THAN THERE ARE WORDS TO DESCRIBE THEM--
--A PHANTASMAGORIC STARSHOW THAT DRIVES AUDIENCE AND GLADIATORS BOTH INTO A PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL FRENZY!
SHE'S NEVER FELT SO WILD, SO FREE...
...SO ALIVE!
ONE SONG RIPS INTO ANOTHER AS DAZZLER PUSHES HERSELF TO HER LIMIT--AND THEN BEYOND...
...TAKING ALL THAT POWER AND ENERGY AND HURLING IT AT THE COMBATANTS ON THE ARENA FLOOR.
THEY NEVER KNOW WHAT HITS THEM.
TO A MAN, THEY DROP--STUNNED UNCONSCIOUS!
RAH HOORAAAHH
DAZZLER IS TRIUMPHANT--
--AND THE CROWD LOVES HER!

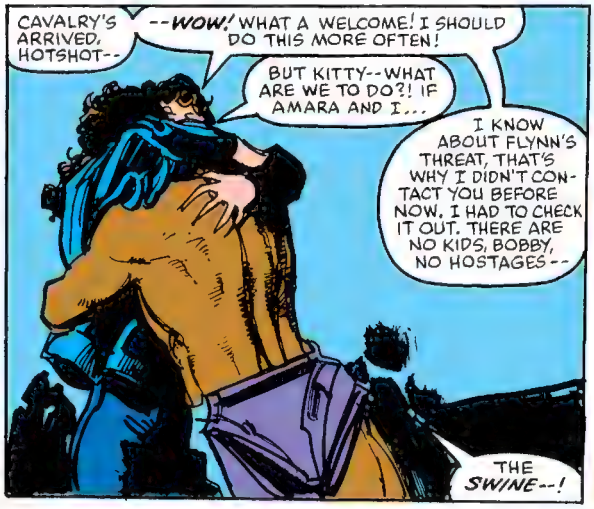

I DID IT! I WON!!
I WASN'T SCARED. I DIDN'T-- I COULDN'T-- HOLD BACK!
IVICH WAS RIGHT, THIS IS WHERE I BELONG!
THIS IS MY HOME!
THAT'S THE SPIRIT, DAZZ! DRINK IN THOSE CHEERS!
THE MORE YOU GET, THE MORE YOU'LL WANT!
AS ALISON WEEPS WITH JOY AND MAX GLOATS, ANOTHER-- HIS PRESENCE MASKED FROM ALL AROUND HIM--WATCHES BEMUSEDLY.
HE HAS NEVER SEEN SUCH LIVING LIGHT AS DAZZLER'S. IT STIRS UNFAMILIAR RESPONSES IN THIS FORM HE HAS ASSUMED AND HE WONDERS WHAT THAT MEANS, WHAT MAKES THIS PARTICULAR BEING SO SPECIAL?
DONE, HORSEFACE.
HE MEANS TO FIND OUT.
FAST WORK-- AND YOU WATCH THE MOUTH, HONEY. I AIN'T SOMEBODY YOU WANNA MAKE ANGRY.
WHATEVER YOU SAY.
IMPRESSIVE-- THE SUCKER WORKS BETTER'N BEFORE.
OKAY, CAT, YOU'RE HIRED.
UHHNNN...
ROBERTO--?!
CAN YOU HEAR ME, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
I LIVE--
--NO THANKS TO YOU! WHO ARE YOU, ANYWAY?!
ALISON BLAIRE-- I'M CALLED DAZZLER. WHEN SAM GUTHRIE ORIGINALLY CAME TO RESCUE YOU, I WAS WITH HIM. I'M HERE TO HELP.
THAT'S RIGHT-- YOU SAVED IVICH, AND STRUCK DOWN AMARA WITH YOUR ACCURSED LIGHT-BLASTS, THE SAME WAY YOU DID ME TONIGHT! IF THIS IS THE WAY YOU AID YOUR FRIENDS, WE WANT NONE OF IT!
I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF-- AND, BESIDES, IT WAS EITHER STUN YOU ALL OR SEE SOMEBODY GET KILLED! PLEASE, TRUST ME!

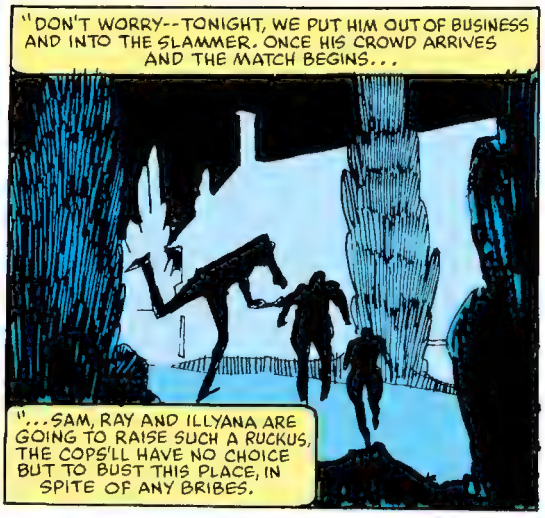

NOT A CHANCE!
I WATCHED YOU IN THE ARENA--YOU LOVED BEING CENTER-STAGE! YOU'RE A FAME ADDICT, DAZZLER, THE KIND OF PERSON WHO'LL DO ANYTHING TO GET--AND KEEP--THAT KIND OF GLORY!
THAT'S NOT TRUE!
LISTEN! HEAR THE DOUBT IN YOUR VOICE?! IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE YOURSELF...
...WHY SHOULD WE?!
BESIDES, WE STAY--AND SERVE--BECAUSE FLYNN GIVES US NO CHOICE, INNOCENT CHILDREN ARE BEING HELD HOSTAGE...
...TO OUR OBEDIENCE.
MY MODIFIED RADIO WORKS PERFECTLY--I CAN HEAR EVERY WORD THE KIDS ARE SAYING, EVEN THROUGH THIS WALL.
FIRST THING TO DO IS FIND OUT IF FLYNN'S THREAT IS LEGIT. I'LL LAY ODDS, THOUGH, IT'S A BLUFF.
I FEEL SO LOUSY ABOUT ALISON.
THIS WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED IF I HADN'T LET HER WALK INTO THIS LION'S DEN.
AND YET, WE CAN'T CODDLE AND PROTECT HER FOREVER. SOMEWHERE, SOMETIME, SHE HAS TO CONFRONT WHO AND WHAT SHE IS--I JUST WISH THINGS HAD TURNED OUT BETTER FOR HER.
MOMENT OF TRUTH--WILL MY IMPROVISED TOY REACH SAM?!
ANYBODY HOME?
ME, OF COURSE, SHADOWCAT, LIKE WE ARRANGED. THE GIRLS ARE NAPPING--HOW'S BY YOU?
COULD BE BETTER, COULD BE WORSE. SUNSPOT AND AMARA ARE ALL RIGHT.
DAZZ...
ONE FOR MY CONSCIENCE, CANNONBALL. I'M REALLY SORRY.
MAKES TWO OF US, GIRL.
WE'LL MAKE OUR MOVE DURING THE GLADIATORS' NEXT MATCH. HERE'S THE PLAN...

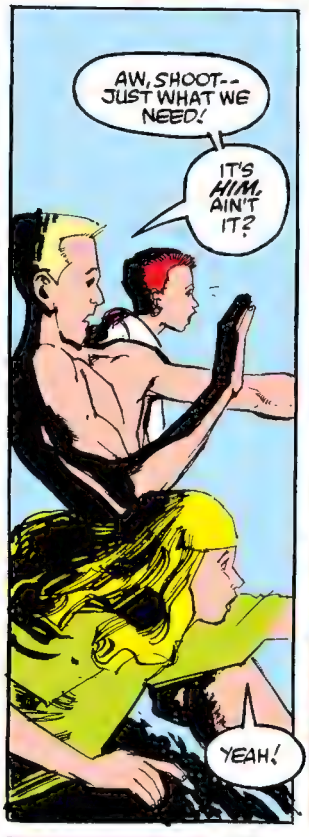
THE NEXT MORNING-- A PRACTICE SESSION IN THE GLADIATORS' EQUIVALENT OF PROFESSOR XAVIER'S DANGER ROOM, WHEREIN THEIR VARIOUS SKILLS AND MUTANT POWERS ARE HONED TO A RAZOR-KEEN EDGE...
EVERYTHING'S GONE WRONG-- EACH TIME I TRY TO TALK TO BOBBY, HE INSULTS ME OR WALKS AWAY. HE WON'T LISTEN AND HE WON'T TRUST ME.
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? HOW CAN I HELP IF THEY WON'T LET ME? IT ISN'T FAIR--CHOOSING TO SING COST ME MY FATHER'S LOVE, THE SAME WAY JOINING THE GLADIATORS HAS COST THE MUTANTS' FRIENDSHIP AND RESPECT.
WHY SHOULD I EVEN CARE ANYMORE? I DID MY BEST-- IF THEY'RE TOO STUBBORN AND STUPID TO ACCEPT...
PAY ATTENTION, GOLDENHAIR! IF YOU'RE AS CARELESS IN THE ARENA...
...YOU'RE SURE TO FIND YOURSELF BADLY SINGED!
MAGMA--
--HURLING A LAVA BOLT!!
I DUCKED--IT MISSED ME-- BARELY! I COULD HAVE BEEN BADLY BURNED!!
SUCH A PITY, MENINA...
...YOU'VE LEAPT FROM THE FIRE...
...TO THE PROVERBIAL FRYING PAN!
HAPPY LANDING!
ROBERTOOOO!?!


I HAVE YOU, DAZZLER!
BLESS YOU, LEXI!
THOSE ROTTEN LITTLE TWERPS, THEY WERE DELIBERATELY TRYING TO *HURT* ME!
SHE WAS IN NO DANGER. I'D HAVE CAUGHT HER, IF NO ONE ELSE DID.
I WASN'T TRYING TO HURT HER, ONLY GIVE HER A *PRIMO* FRIGHT.
IT APPEARS I SUCCEEDED.
PROUD OF YOURSELF, SHORTY?!
NOTHING'S FORGOTTEN, SUNSPOT-- *NOTHING!*
AND DAZZLER PAYS HER DEBTS! WITH INTEREST!!
THE ONLY THING I'VE EVER WANTED WAS TO BE A STAR, IS THAT SO WRONG?! DOES THAT MAKE ME EVIL, IS THAT WHY EVERY-ONE RESENTS AND HATES ME?!
I FIGURED US BEING MUTANTS MADE US KINDRED SOULS. MY MISTAKE. YOU NEW MUTANTS AND I ARE *QUITS*, DACOSTA!
FROM NOW ON, DAZZLER LOOKS OUT FOR NUMBER ONE--HERSELF!
SPLENDID, MY DEAR, *SPLENDID*-- EVERY DAY, IN EVERY WAY, YOUR OWN INNER FEARS AND TERRORS DRIVE YOU AWAY FROM YOUR TRUE FRIENDS...
...AND BIND YOU EVER MORE CLOSELY TO ME.
I'M MEDITATING, SAM, TRYING TO LOCATE THE ODD PSYCHIC PRESENCE I FELT EARLIER.
YOU FIGURE IT'S THAT *BEYONDER* FELLA?
OF COURSE. WHY DO YOU THINK SHE'S LOOKING SO HARD?
HE REALLY SHOOK YOU UP, ILLYANA.
THAT WAS NO ILLUSION IN LIMBO, SAM, THAT WAS *ME!*
I'M A *DEMON SORCERESS.* A PART OF MY FUNDAMENTAL SELF--MY SOUL--IS *EVIL.* THE BEYONDER BROUGHT THAT TO THE SURFACE WITH THE SAME UNTHINKING EASE YOU DRAW A BREATH.
IF NOT FOR KITTY, I'D HAVE KILLED YOU--OR WORSE. NEXT TIME, WE MAY NOT BE SO LUCKY. THAT'S HARD TO LIVE WITH.


WONDER WHY HE CAME TO EARTH?
BOREDOM PROBABLY--A CELESTIAL SADIST OUT FOR SOME CHEAP THRILLS.
I DON'T BUY THAT, ILLYANA, THERE'S GOTTA BE A BETTER REASON. HE POSSESSES THE SORT OF POWER ONLY THE LORD'S SUPPOSED TO HAVE.
MAYBE THAT'S WHO HE IS.
UNLESS HE'S THE DEVIL. WHICHEVER, HOW THE HECK DO WE FIGHT HIM?
WE COULD DIE JUST AS EASILY DOWN THERE, SAM.
THAT'S DIFFERENT. THAT'S REAL, ILLYANA--IT'S... HUMAN!
LIKE WHEN AH WORKED IN THE MINES--THERE WAS RISK, BUT IT CAME WITH THE TERRITORY. IT WAS SOMETHING ALL THE MEN UNDERSTOOD, AND ACCEPTED. BUT THIS BEYONDER--
--HOW CAN YOU PLAY HIS GAME WHEN HE MAKES UP THE RULES AS HE GOES ALONG AND CHANGES THEM WHENEVER HE FEELS LIKE IT?!
AS BEST YOU CAN, SILLY. AND PRAY WE GET REAL LUCKY.
NOT A SIGN OF HIM. HE'S EITHER LONG GONE, OR HIDING FROM MY PROBES.
BUT KITTY RADIOED, THE BOUT'S TONIGHT.
FIGURES--IT'S SATURDAY.
AND SO...
IF I DISABLE THIS JUNCTION...
FZSZT!
...I SHOULD KAYO THE LIGHTS AND THE SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS--THE GLADIATORS WILL BE BLIND AND DEAF--
CLANGAL ANGALAN GALANGA
--AT LEAST, UNTIL THE BACK-UP SYSTEMS COME ON-LINE.
THERE GO THE ALARMS!
BOBBY!
A FIGURE--MATERIALIZING THROUGH MY CEILING--
--KITTY!?!

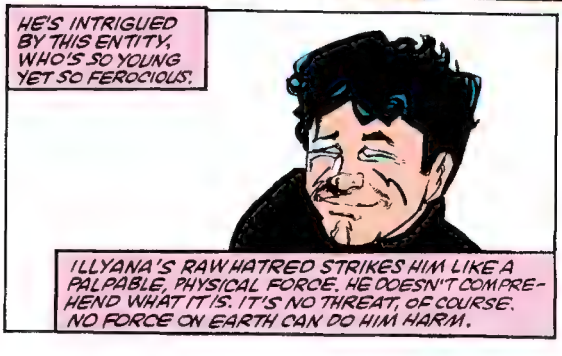

CAVALRY'S ARRIVED, HOTSHOT--
--WOW! WHAT A WELCOME! I SHOULD DO THIS MORE OFTEN!
BUT KITTY--WHAT ARE WE TO DO?! IF AMARA AND I...
I KNOW ABOUT FLYNN'S THREAT, THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T CONTACT YOU BEFORE NOW. I HAD TO CHECK IT OUT. THERE ARE NO KIDS, BOBBY, NO HOSTAGES--
THE SWINE--!

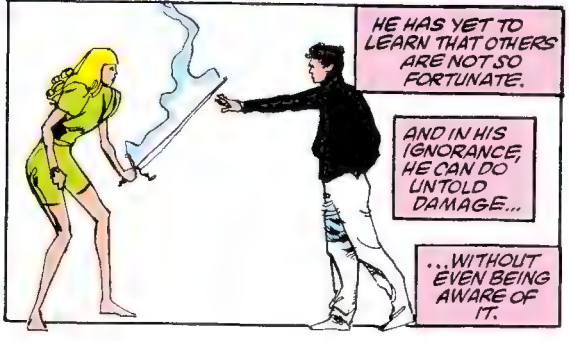

"DON'T WORRY--TONIGHT, WE PUT HIM OUT OF BUSINESS AND INTO THE SLAMMER. ONCE HIS CROWD ARRIVES AND THE MATCH BEGINS...
"...SAM, RAY AND ILLYANA ARE GOING TO RAISE SUCH A RUCKUS, THE COPS'LL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO BUST THIS PLACE, IN SPITE OF ANY BRIBES.

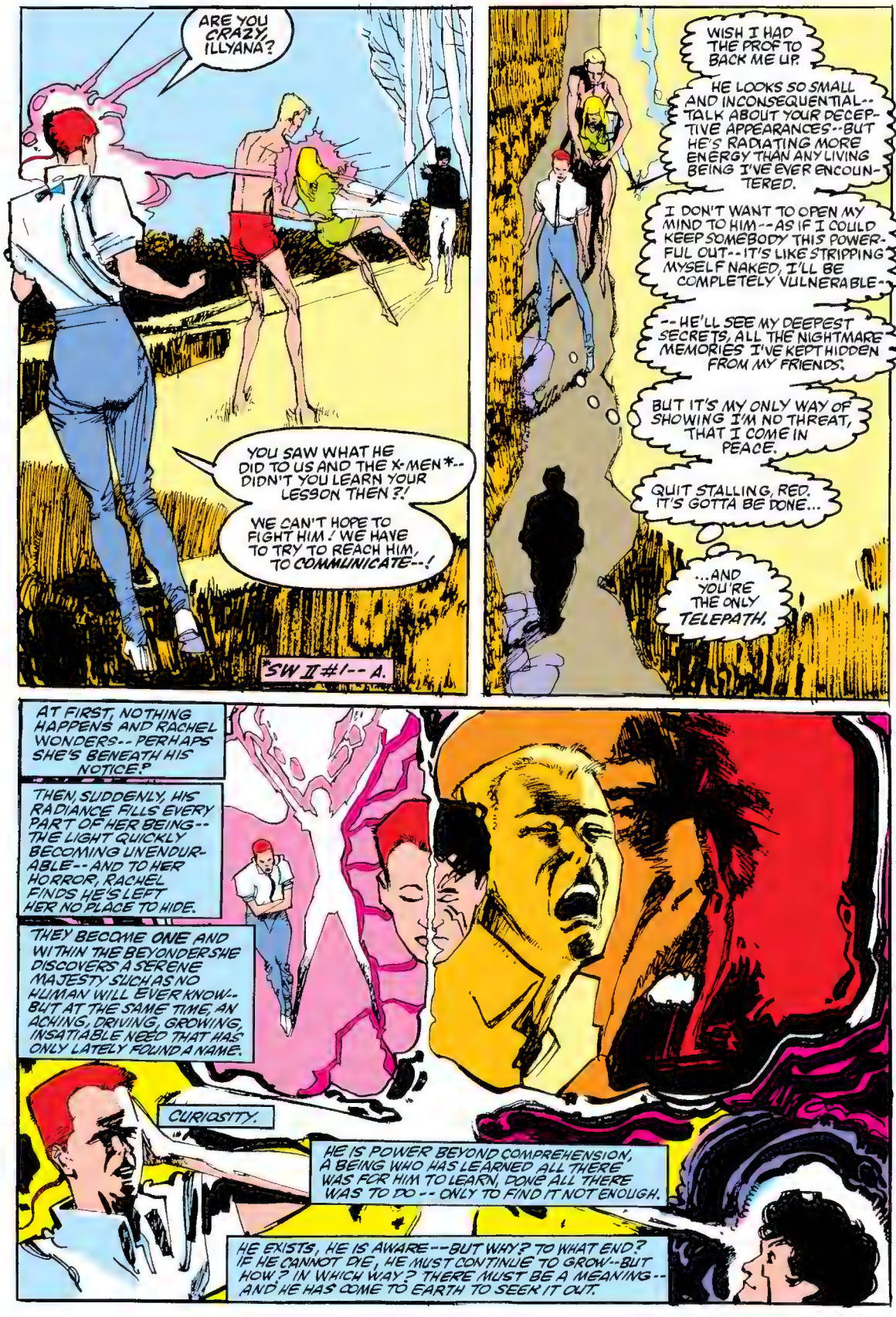

AW, SHOOT--JUST WHAT WE NEED!
IT'S HIM, AIN'T IT?
YEAH!

THE BEYONDER!

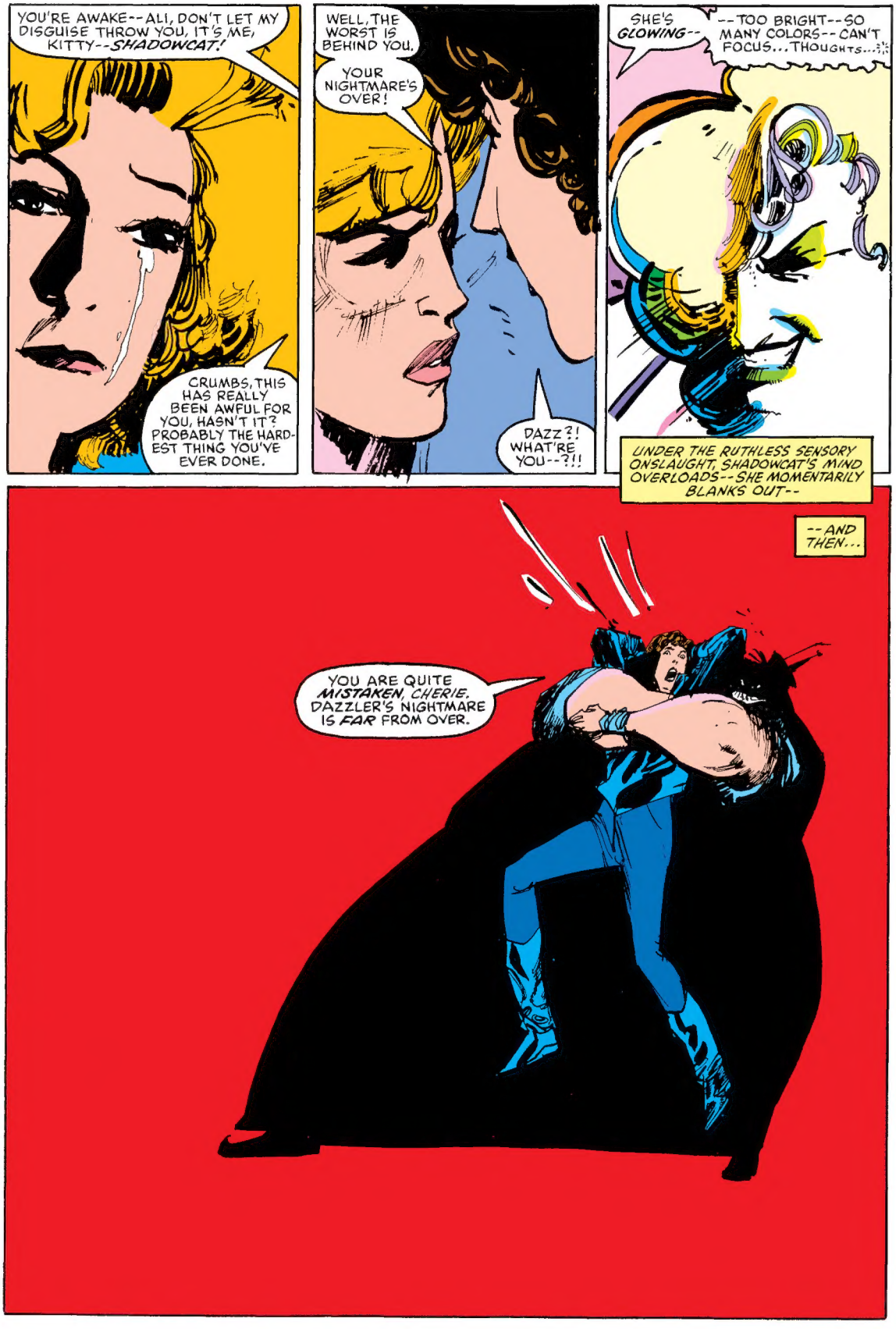
STAND ASIDE, WHATEVER YOU ARE! LEAVE US BE! OR ELSE!!
YOU WON'T CATCH ME BY SURPRISE THIS TIME, CREEP, I'M READY FOR YOU!
AND I WON'T TELL YOU TWICE!

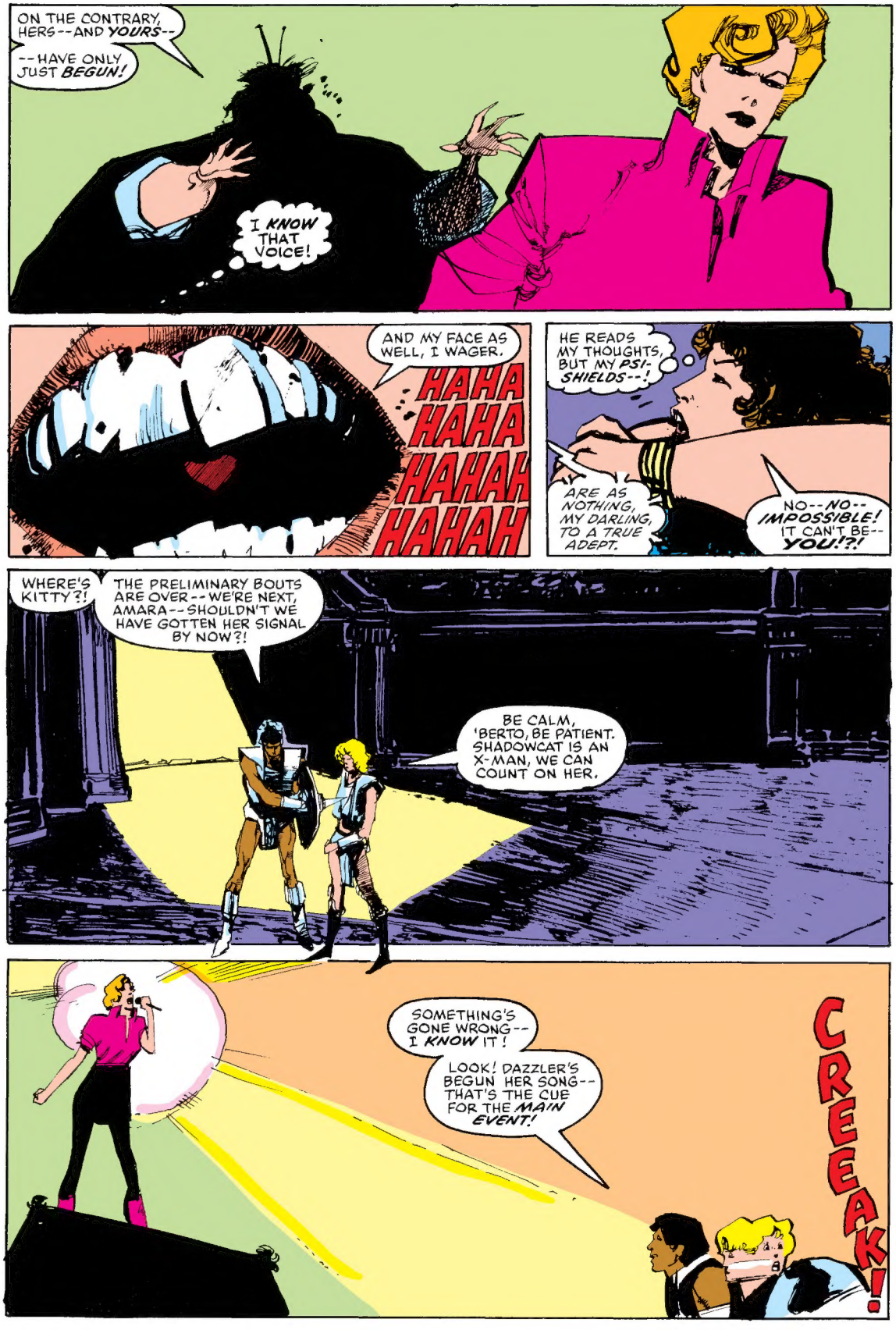

HE'S INTRIGUED BY THIS ENTITY, WHO'S SO YOUNG YET SO FEROCIOUS.
ILLYANA'S RAW HATRED STRIKES HIM LIKE A PALPABLE, PHYSICAL FORCE. HE DOESN'T COMPREHEND WHAT IT IS. IT'S NO THREAT, OF COURSE. NO FORCE ON EARTH CAN DO HIM HARM.

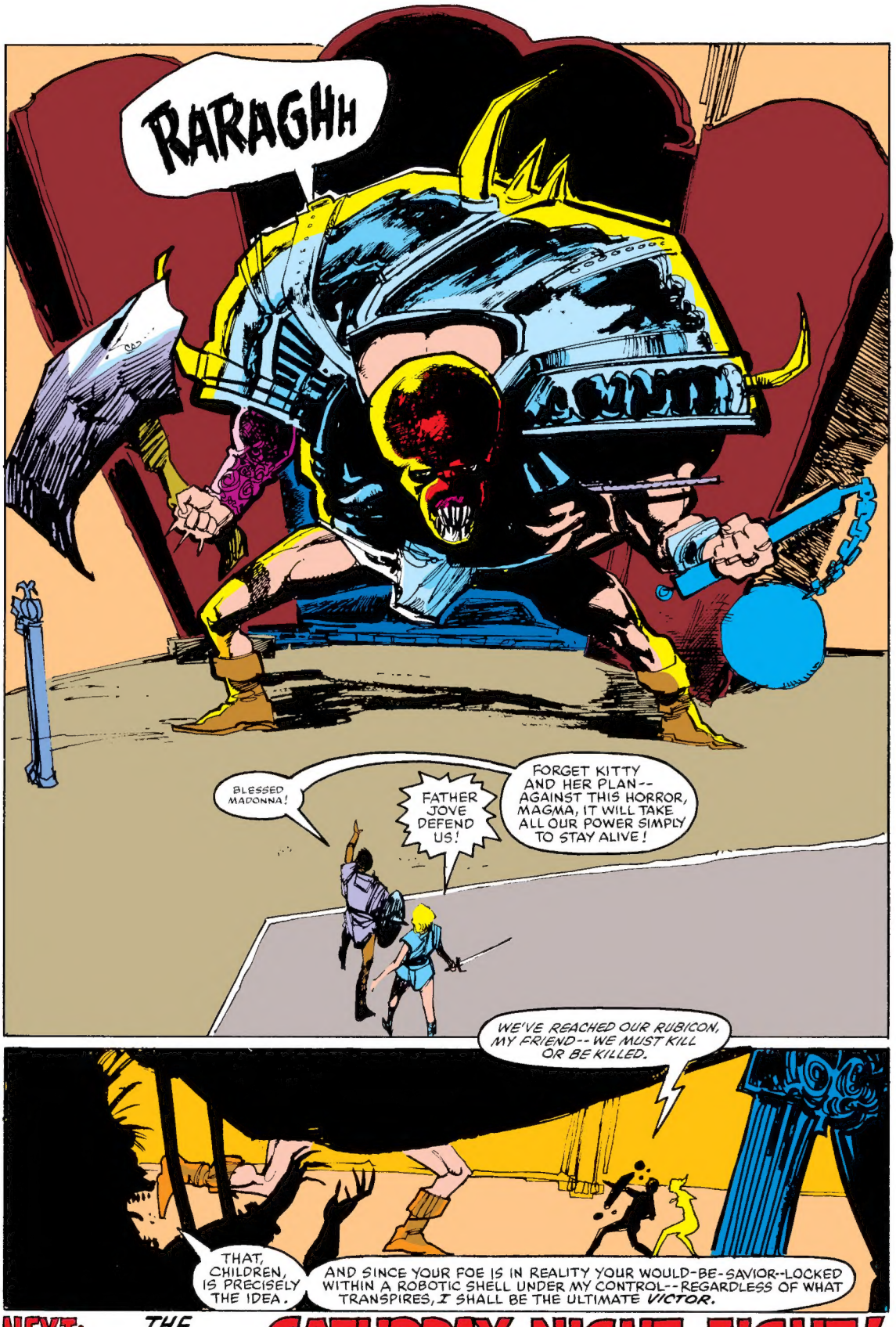

HE HAS YET TO LEARN THAT OTHERS ARE NOT SO FORTUNATE.
AND IN HIS IGNORANCE, HE CAN DO UNTOLD DAMAGE...
...WITHOUT EVEN BEING AWARE OF IT.


ARE YOU CRAZY, ILLYANA?
YOU SAW WHAT HE DID TO US AND THE X-MEN*-- DIDN'T YOU LEARN YOUR LESSON THEN?!
WE CAN'T HOPE TO FIGHT HIM! WE HAVE TO TRY TO REACH HIM, TO COMMUNICATE--!
*SW II #1-- A.
WISH I HAD THE PROF TO BACK ME UP.
HE LOOKS SO SMALL AND INCONSEQUENTIAL-- TALK ABOUT YOUR DECEPTIVE APPEARANCES--BUT HE'S RADIATING MORE ENERGY THAN ANY LIVING BEING I'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED.
I DON'T WANT TO OPEN MY MIND TO HIM--AS IF I COULD KEEP SOMEBODY THIS POWERFUL OUT--IT'S LIKE STRIPPING MYSELF NAKED, I'LL BE COMPLETELY VULNERABLE--
--HE'LL SEE MY DEEPEST SECRETS, ALL THE NIGHTMARE MEMORIES I'VE KEPT HIDDEN FROM MY FRIENDS.
BUT IT'S MY ONLY WAY OF SHOWING I'M NO THREAT, THAT I COME IN PEACE.
QUIT STALLING, RED. IT'S GOTTA BE DONE...
...AND YOU'RE THE ONLY TELEPATH.
AT FIRST, NOTHING HAPPENS AND RACHEL WONDERS-- PERHAPS SHE'S BENEATH HIS NOTICE?
THEN, SUDDENLY, HIS RADIANCE FILLS EVERY PART OF HER BEING-- THE LIGHT QUICKLY BECOMING UNENDURABLE-- AND TO HER HORROR, RACHEL FINDS HE'S LEFT HER NO PLACE TO HIDE.
THEY BECOME ONE AND WITHIN THE BEYONDER SHE DISCOVERS A SERENE MAJESTY SUCH AS NO HUMAN WILL EVER KNOW-- BUT AT THE SAME TIME, AN ACHING, DRIVING, GROWING, INSATIABLE NEED THAT HAS ONLY LATELY FOUND A NAME.
CURIOSITY.
HE IS POWER BEYOND COMPREHENSION, A BEING WHO HAS LEARNED ALL THERE WAS FOR HIM TO LEARN, DONE ALL THERE WAS TO DO -- ONLY TO FIND IT NOT ENOUGH.
HE EXISTS, HE IS AWARE--BUT WHY? TO WHAT END? IF HE CANNOT DIE, HE MUST CONTINUE TO GROW--BUT HOW? IN WHICH WAY? THERE MUST BE A MEANING-- AND HE HAS COME TO EARTH TO SEEK IT OUT.

SHE'S BURNIN' UP--STOP IT--YOU'RE KILLIN' HER!!
HE AIN'T LISTENING!
MOST LIKELY, HE JUST DOESN'T CARE.
HANG ON, ILLYANA!
;OH!?!=
WHAT'D YOU SEE, RAY?! WHAT'D HE DO?!!
A LIGHT, SAM--SO BEAUTIFUL, YET SO...TERRIBLE--LIKE THE STORIES TOLD ABOUT MY MOM, ABOUT DARK PHOENIX.
BEYOND THAT, I...I CAN'T REMEMBER.
HE VANISHED WHEN WE GRABBED YOU--I GUESS HE HAD HIS FUN WITH US AND WENT LOOKING FOR NEW TOYS TO PLAY WITH. GOOD RIDDANCE!
MEANWHILE, INSIDE THE MANSION..
WE'LL USE THE CONFUSION TO COVER OUR GETAWAY.
I WANT TO DEAL WITH FLYNN MYSELF!
DON'T LET HIM DRAG YOU DOWN TO HIS SCUMMY LEVEL, BOBBY, LEAVE HIM TO THE LAW.
BE READY FOR MY SIGNAL.
I'LL WARN AMY...
...AND DAZZLER.
SO FAR, SO GOOD --THEY HAVEN'T RESTORED MAIN POWER YET, THE SLOW-POKES...
...BUT IT CAN'T TAKE MUCH LONGER.
WHAT'S THIS--HER DIARY?!!
I can't go on, I've tried and tried--I want to belong so much, this breaks my heart--but I find myself saying and doing things that I hate, I can't seem to help myself. It'd be easy to blame that on the drug they gave me, but that's just an excuse. I'm not a Gladiator. I never will be. I love the fame
"I LOVE THE FAME, I WANT TO BE A STAR--BUT NOT AT THE COST OF MY SOUL."
BRAVO, DAZZLER!
YOU FACED YOUR INNER DEMON AT LAST--JUST AS I DID IN JAPAN--AND TRIUMPHED. YOU MAY NOT BE A STAR...
...BUT YOU JUST PROVED YOURSELF A HERO!


YOU'RE AWAKE--ALI, DON'T LET MY DISGUISE THROW YOU, IT'S ME, KITTY--SHADOWCAT!
CRUMBS, THIS HAS REALLY BEEN AWFUL FOR YOU, HASN'T IT? PROBABLY THE HARDEST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE.
WELL, THE WORST IS BEHIND YOU.
YOUR NIGHTMARE'S OVER!
DAZZ?! WHAT'RE YOU--?!!
SHE'S GLOWING--
--TOO BRIGHT--SO MANY COLORS--CAN'T FOCUS...THOUGHTS...?!
UNDER THE RUTHLESS SENSORY ONSLAUGHT, SHADOWCAT'S MIND OVERLOADS--SHE MOMENTARILY BLANKS OUT--
--AND THEN...
YOU ARE QUITE MISTAKEN, CHERIE. DAZZLER'S NIGHTMARE IS FAR FROM OVER.


ON THE CONTRARY, HERS--AND YOURS--
--HAVE ONLY JUST BEGUN!
I KNOW THAT VOICE!
AND MY FACE AS WELL, I WAGER.
HAHA HAHA HAHAH HAHAH
HE READS MY THOUGHTS, BUT MY PSI-SHIELDS--!
ARE AS NOTHING, MY DARLING, TO A TRUE ADEPT.
NO--NO--IMPOSSIBLE! IT CAN'T BE--YOU!?!
WHERE'S KITTY?!
THE PRELIMINARY BOUTS ARE OVER--WE'RE NEXT, AMARA--SHOULDN'T WE HAVE GOTTEN HER SIGNAL BY NOW?!
BE CALM, 'BERTO, BE PATIENT. SHADOWCAT IS AN X-MAN, WE CAN COUNT ON HER.
SOMETHING'S GONE WRONG--I KNOW IT!
LOOK! DAZZLER'S BEGUN HER SONG--THAT'S THE CUE FOR THE MAIN EVENT!
CREEAK!


RARAGHH
BLESSED MADONNA!
FATHER JOVE DEFEND US!
FORGET KITTY AND HER PLAN-- AGAINST THIS HORROR, MAGMA, IT WILL TAKE ALL OUR POWER SIMPLY TO STAY ALIVE!
WE'VE REACHED OUR RUBICON, MY FRIEND-- WE MUST KILL OR BE KILLED.
THAT, CHILDREN, IS PRECISELY THE IDEA.
AND SINCE YOUR FOE IS IN REALITY YOUR WOULD-BE-SAVIOR--LOCKED WITHIN A ROBOTIC SHELL UNDER MY CONTROL--REGARDLESS OF WHAT TRANSPIRES, I SHALL BE THE ULTIMATE VICTOR.

NEXT: THE CONCLUSION-- SATURDAY NIGHT FIGHT!